

Who's In Charge of Your Meeting?

By Craig Harrison



Do any of these things happen at your meetings?

- * People arrive late
- * people leave early
- * someone yells BINGO in mid-meeting
- * People are unprepared
- * A key person is absent
- * Someone asks for a pencil or pen
- * People mysteriously get paged midway through and leave in droves

Before you blame others it's entirely possible the fault resides with you, the caller of the meeting. As the facilitator, leader or organizer of the meeting you are ultimately responsible for everything that does and doesn't happen in your meeting. What are you doing right? What are you doing wrong?

Allergic to Meet?

Here are **7 things** to do before you hold your next meeting:

1. Ask yourself if it's really needed. Can goals be achieved by e-mail, fax, memo or conference call instead of a meeting?
2. Identify who needs to be there and who doesn't. Respect everyone's time.
3. Set the time, location, duration, agenda items and purpose (!) for the meeting.
4. Publicize it in advance to insure full attendance.
5. Call out responsibilities for the meeting in advance so all can prepare accordingly.
6. Set the environment for optimal success. Room layout, supplies, temperature, etc. all contribute to success/failure of meetings.
7. Incent attendance through food, fun or other enticements.

About Your Published Agenda:

1. Is the purpose of your meeting documented in your Agenda?
2. Do you have names next to each item to denote responsibility?
3. Are time windows associated with each item?
4. Do you make clear what is to be discussed vs. what is to be decided?

Ready, Set, Meet

Here are **seven tips** to follow at your meeting:

1. Start on time.
2. Don't start over when latecomers arrive, or take time to recap what they missed.
3. Set the proper tone through your opening remarks.
4. Remind people of the purpose, goals and expectations for the meeting at its outset.
5. When calling on others for their reports you may preface their remarks with your own to frame their contributions, orient listeners.
6. Keep at firm grip on the timing of your meeting. As necessary you can ask for a summary, refer items to committee, request a written report or simply table longwinded discussions as necessary.
7. End on time!

Make parliamentary procedure your friend

You don't have to be a Parliamentarian to invoke the following procedural phrases:

I (hereby) call this meeting to order .. To officially start the meeting

Let's table that .. Suspend discussion of the topic (or motion) at hand indefinitely.

Point of information .. Nice way of asking for clarification at any time.

Point of clarification .. Ask at any time when you are confused.

I call for the question .. It's time to address the previous question

Let's refer it to committee .. A way of off-loading the current discussion

Hearing no objections .. A way of moving forward to a vote or the next item

Since we're in agreement .. Another way of garnering agreement to act

We're adjourned .. Game over!

Avoid these incorrect (though commonly heard) phrases

DON'T SAY: "I want to make a motion that..." - INSTEAD, Say - "I move that..." or simply "I move..."

DON'T SAY: "I make a motion that..." - INSTEAD, Say - "I move that..."

DON'T SAY: "A 2/3 Majority" - INSTEAD, Say - "A Majority" or "2/3"

(a 2/3 majority is not a majority. Since a majority is half plus one, 2/3 of THAT is less than half!)

DON'T SAY: "Our next Order of Business..." - INSTEAD, Say - "Our next Business in Order..."

"Order of Business" is your AGENDA. You're still using the same Agenda, just moving your way down its list.

DON'T SAY OR WRITE ON AGENDA: "Old Business" INSTEAD, SAY OR WRITE: "Unfinished Business"

Meet Tenderizers

Most meeting leaders equip themselves with a gavel, pointer, markers and white board or flip chart. Consider other tools of the trade such as a talking stick or fun kush-ball to toss around to the speaker who has the floor. Use name tents if everyone doesn't already know each other. It also informs people where you'd like them to sit. Consider the use of a fun ice-breaker to get everyone on the same frequency. (E-mail me for a free set of ten ice-breakers you can customize for your future meetings.)

Enjoying The Fruits of Your Labor

Remember, the surgeon general had identified an all-Meet diet as hazardous to your health. Season your meets to make them appetizing and healthy for all!

About the author:

Professional speaker Craig Harrison's Expressions of Excellence!™ provides sales and service solutions through speaking. For more information on Craig and his work visit www.ExpressionsOfExcellence.com

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